

Message Text

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PAGE 01 QUEBEC 00165 171927Z
ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 0165

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EFIN. PINT, CA
SUBJECT: QUEBECOIS UNITE TO CONDEMN FEDERAL TAX REBATE
SCHEME

REF: MONTREAL 995

1. LATEST DEVELOPMENT IN OTTAWA/QUEBEC SALES TAX IMBROGLIO
WAS YESTERDAY'S ALL PARTY VOTE OF DISAPPROVAL OF FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT'S DIRECT REBATE SCHEME BY QUEBEC NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY. MOTION, WHICH RECEIVED UNANIMOUS SUPPORT, WAS
PROPOSED BY RENE LEVESQUE AND CALLED ON MEMBERS OF FEDERAL
PARLIAMENT TO OPPOSE REBATE PLAN. PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS OF
OPPOSITION SPOKE IN SUPPORT OF RESOLUTION. LIBERAL PAR-
LIAMENTARY LEADER, GERARD D LEVESQUE, IS QUOTED AS SAYING HIS
PARTY BACKED RESOLUTION WITH "MOST COMPLETE AND UNEQUIVOCAL
SUPPORT." RAYMOND GARNEAU, FORMER QUEBEC FINANCE MINISTER
AND RECENT CANDIDATE FOR LIBERAL PARTY LEADERSHIP, WHO HAS
BEEN THE ONLY PROMINENT QUEBEC PROVINCIAL POLITICIAN TO
SPEAK OUT IN SUPPORT OF THE FEDERAL SCHEME, WAS ABSENT FROM
ASSEMBLY WHEN VOTE WAS TAKEN ON RESOLUTION.

COMMENT: FACT THAT ALL PARTIES SUPPORTED RESOLUTION DIS-
APPROVING SCHEME IS GOOD INDICATION OF THE WAY PUBLIC OPINION IS
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PAGE 02 QUEBEC 00165 171927Z

RUNNING AT PRESENT IN QUEBEC. WE HAVE YET TO HEAR A KIND
OR COMPLIMENTARY WORD FOR CHRETEN'S SCHEME AMONG OUR QUEBECOIS
CONTACTS. ATTITUDES RANGE FROM GLEE AMONG PEQUISTES FOR WHAT
THEY DESCRIBE AS CHRETEN'S PUBLIC HUMILIATION TO SAD COMMENT
BY LOCAL FEDERALIST WHO SEES TAX REBATE SCHEME AS SHABBY POLITICAL
MANEUVER WHICH BACKFIRED DAMAGING FEDERALIST CAUSE. TH I S
COULD CHANGE WHEN REBATE CHECKS BEGIN TO ARRIVE. PARIZEAU MAY

ALSO SUFFER FROM BACKLASH SHOULD HE ATTEMPT RECOVER PROVINCIAL
DEFICIT RESULTING FROM SELECTIVE SALES TAX REMISSION. HOWEVER,
NONE OF THIS LIKELY COMPLETELY ERADICATE DAMAGE DONE IMAGE OF
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND ITS FINANCE MINISTER. LESS
SOPHISTICATED VOTERS LIKELY BE LEFT WITH IMPRESSION OF FEDERAL
POLITICIANS WHO REFUSED ASSISTANCE TO QUEBEC'S MOST NEEDY INDUSTRIES
AND THEN IGNORED POOR WHEN PASSING OUT TAX REBATE. SLIGHTLY MORE
SOPHISTICATED MAY BE LEFT WITH IMPRESSION OF FUMBLER WHO WAS
EASILY OUTWITTED BY PEQUISTES AND THEN TURNED VENAL IN EFFORT
GAIN REVENAGE. WHILE PQ MAY NOT COME OUT OF DISPUTE UNTARNISHED
PUBLIC RELATIONS ADVANTAGE SEEMS CLEARLY ON THEIR SIDE AT THIS
POINT. IN FACT, "COUP DE LA TAXE DE VENTE"
SEEMS TO HAVE GIVEN PQ MUCH NEEDED SHOT IN ARM
AFTER LONG PERIOD OF SAGGING MORALE. MCNMARA

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